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SUBJECT: SADC POISED TO SUSPEND MADAGASCAR AT MARCH 30
HEADS OF STATE SUMMIT

REF: A) STATE 029453B) ANTANANARIVO 217C) PRETORIA 582

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MAURICE S. PARKER FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. SUMMARY: According to Dr. John Kunene, Swazi Principal Secretary (PS) at Ministry of Defense and SADC negotiator, SADC Heads of State are poised to take the first step in seeking a constitutionally-based resolution to the change of power in Madagascar, by suspending that nation from the organization. This action is expected to take place during the community's March 30 Heads of State summit at Lozitha Palace, Swaziland. Dr. Kunene stated that the Troika Heads of State developed this recommendation during their meeting in Swaziland on March 19, but has deferred the decision to the SADC Heads of State. If the suspension does not compel the de facto Head of State in Madagascar to abide by Malagasy constitutional provisions for change of government, SADC is willing to increase the pressure on that nation by imposing trade sanctions. The upcoming SADC meeting will also take assessment of the current Zimbabwean Government of National Unity. End Summary

SADC Perspective on Madagascar

¶2. In response to reftel A, Embassy delivered a copy of demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador Parker met with Dr. John Kunene at the Swazi Ministry of Defense to discuss the matter. Dr Kunene was delighted to learn the position of the USG regarding Madagascar and will share our DipNote with King Mswati III as background information prior to the SADC Heads of State summit March 29 and 30, 2009. The Foreign Ministers will convene on the 29th and the Heads of State on Monday, March 30th; ten have confirmed their attendance. The PS said that SADC Troika Heads of State clearly expressed their displeasure with the coup d'etat during their March 19 meeting and will present their recommendations for actions against the current government of Madagascar during the upcoming Heads of State Summit.

¶3. According to Dr. Kunene, the SADC Troika views Rajolina's power grab as unconstitutional for two reasons: a) the constitution requires the President to be a minimum of 40 years of age; and, b) the constitution places the leader of parliament (speaker of the lower house) as second in line in the event the President is unable to fulfill his/her duties. Since the de facto President is only 34 years old, nor is he the head of parliament, he is constitutionally ineligible to hold the office of President.

¶4. At the upcoming summit, the Troika will recommend that SADC negotiators (including Dr. Kunene) return to Madagascar for meetings with Rajolina and the colonels to propose that former President Ravalomanana be authorized to safely return to the country. The government should hold either a referendum of confidence/no confidence on the democratically elected president, or the nation should hold multi-party elections to determine a new president. Dr. Kunene said that the colonels and Mayor Rajolina should also be granted pardons for holding a mutiny and coup d'etat. If the current government of Madagascar refuses to accept these terms, SADC will place pressure on the island nation by expelling it from

the regional organization. If within six months the expulsion does not lead to a change of government, SADC will recommend strict trade sanctions against Madagascar. Dr. Kunene stated that these actions would seriously impact the Malagasy economy, particularly the tourism industry. Developments in Zimbabwe

15. The status of Zimbabwe's Government of National Unity will be the second item on SADC's agenda for the Heads of State meeting. Dr. Kunene said that SADC is pleased with recent developments in Zimbabwe, particularly President Mugabe's recent call for national tolerance of members of the MDC party. He described SADC as the "midwife" of the Government of National Unity, and said it plans to continue closely monitoring events in Zimbabwe to ensure success.

Comment

16. Dr. Kunene is optimistic that SADC actions will work if nations like the United States, and international organizations, join SADC in exerting steady pressure on the GOM. He warned that France could be the fly in the ointment. He stated that he received a telephone call from the French Charge d' Affaires in Antananarivo on March 26. Although he did not divulge the content of the conversation, he said that he suspects the GOF might undermine international efforts by increasing assistance to Madagascar.

17. Despite Dr. Kunene's optimism for strong actions against Madagascar, SADC actions against member states have rarely matched its internal rhetoric. Dr. Kunene and Ambassador Parker have agreed to have a telephone conversation following Monday's SADC summit.

PARKER